



PTEROPUS SOLIDCEPHALUS; Temm.

PTEROPUS POLIOCEPHALUS, *Temm.*

Grey-headed Vampire.

Pteropus poliocephalus, Temm. Monog., tom. i. p. 179, tom. ii. p. 66.—Gray, List of Mamm. in Brit. Mus., p. 36.

NEW SOUTH WALES is the true and probably the restricted habitat of this large species of Bat; for I have never seen a specimen from any other part of the Australian continent, and it certainly does not inhabit Van Diemen's Land as stated by M. Temminck: the situations in which I met with it were the dense and luxuriant brushes which fringe the south-eastern portion of Australia, such as those at Illawarra, in the neighbourhood of the Hunter, the Manning and the Clarence; I possess, however, a specimen said to have been killed at Bathurst, which, although of much smaller size, I believe to be the same. Like all other Bats, the Grey-headed Vampire is strictly nocturnal in its habits, and remains during the day suspended from the branches of the larger trees clothing the gullies and mountain sides; at nightfall it sallies forth in search of its natural food, which principally consists of the fruits and berries peculiar to the brushes, the small wild fig when ripe being a favourite article. The enormous numbers that may be seen sleeping pendent from the trees in the more secluded parts of the forest are beyond conception; it is not surprising therefore that the settlers whose abodes may be in the neighbourhood of one of these colonies, should find their peach orchards entirely devastated in a single night. Indeed no one of the native animals is more troublesome to the settlers than this large Bat, which, resorting to the fruit-grounds by night, when it is impossible to protect them from its attacks, commits the most fearful havoc. Many pages might doubtless be written respecting the habits and economy of these great Bats, but this can only be done by those who, having been long resident in the country, have had ample opportunities of observing them, which the rapidity of my explorations and the brevity of my stay did not admit. In describing the habits of a nearly allied species (the *Pteropus Javanicus*) Dr. Horsfield states, that "they congregate in companies, and selecting a large tree for their resort, suspend themselves by the claws of their hind limbs to the naked branches, affording to the stranger a very singular spectacle; in short, to a person unaccustomed to their habits, they might be readily mistaken for fruit of a large size, suspended from the branches. They thus pass the greater portion of the day in sleep; but soon after sunset they gradually quit their hold, and pursue their nocturnal flight in quest of food. They direct their course, by an unerring instinct, to the forests, villages and plantations, occasioning incalculable mischief, attacking and devouring indiscriminately every kind of fruit, from the abundant and useful cocoa-nut, which surrounds the dwelling of the meanest peasantry, to the rare and most delicate productions which are cultivated with care by princes and chiefs of distinction. Their flight is slow and steady, pursued in a straight line, and capable of long continuance." This interesting account of the habits of the Javan species doubtless applies in an equal degree to those of the present animal, since we may reasonably infer that the economy of two species so nearly allied is very similar.

Its flesh forms one of the multitudinous articles partaken of as food by the aborigines.

The entire head brown, grised with grey; round the neck and advancing on to the back a very broad collar of deep rust-red; upper surface and the clothing of the arms glossy black, grised with greyish olive, the olive hue becoming more apparent on the hind quarters; under surface brownish black, many of the hairs pointed with olive-yellow; down each flank a patch of rufous; ears and wing-membranes naked and of a deep purplish black; claws black, becoming horny at the tip.

The figures are of the natural size.